

Analysis

INDOOR SOCCER PARTICIPATION



Sarah Hoskins
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

03	Introduction
04	Overall Participation
05	Casual vs. Core Participation
06	Demographics - Gender
07	Demographics - Age
08	Demographics - Income
09	Summary
10	References

INTRODUCTION

Soccer is the most popular sport in the world, and although it may be increasing in popularity, overall participation has not had the same momentum (Lewis 2022). Until 2020, Outdoor Soccer participation was on a steady decrease. There are many factors that could have influenced this decline and sudden spike during the pandemic. The purpose of this analysis is to look at factors that may have contributed to the decrease in participation for Outdoor Soccer and see if there have been the same effects on Indoor Soccer.

Looking at the overall participation of the sport while taking into consideration the possible effects of the pandemic and analyzing the demographics of Indoor Soccer participants, we can see if the sport is on the same path as its outdoor counterpart.

Following this analysis, we can consider the benefits of Indoor Soccer and determine ways in which to successfully increase participation.

Data:

The data collected for this analysis was obtained from the Sports Business Research Network. Participation statistics are retrieved from a nationwide study conducted by Sports Marketing Surveys USA (SMS).



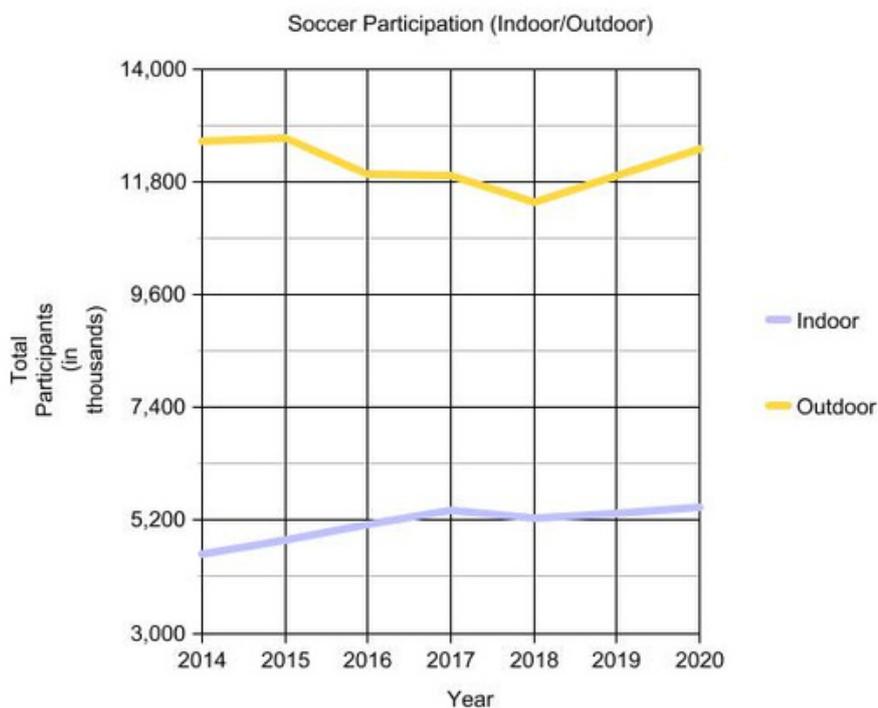
OVERALL PARTICIPATION

After the United States hosted the 1994 FIFA World Cup and the 1999 Women's World Cup, the country saw a spike in interest surround the sport.

The 1990's and 2000's were the "golden ages" of the sport as popularity increased, but in recent years the participation in soccer was at a steady decline (Lewis 2022). The figure below demonstrates this decline from 2015-2018.

Indoor Soccer, however has been growing relatively steadily, other than a slight decrease between 2017 and 2018. The graph below suggests that Indoor Soccer may not be following the same growth patterns as Outdoor Soccer.

Both Indoor and Outdoor Soccer saw a large spike in 2020 (see graph below), which may seem quite surprising. Most team sports suffered due to the pandemic. Soccer (indoor and outdoor), however, were two of just four team sports that grew in participation. Sports that were able to be played more recreationally or in a socially distanced manner were those that saw an increase during 2020 (SFIA 2021).

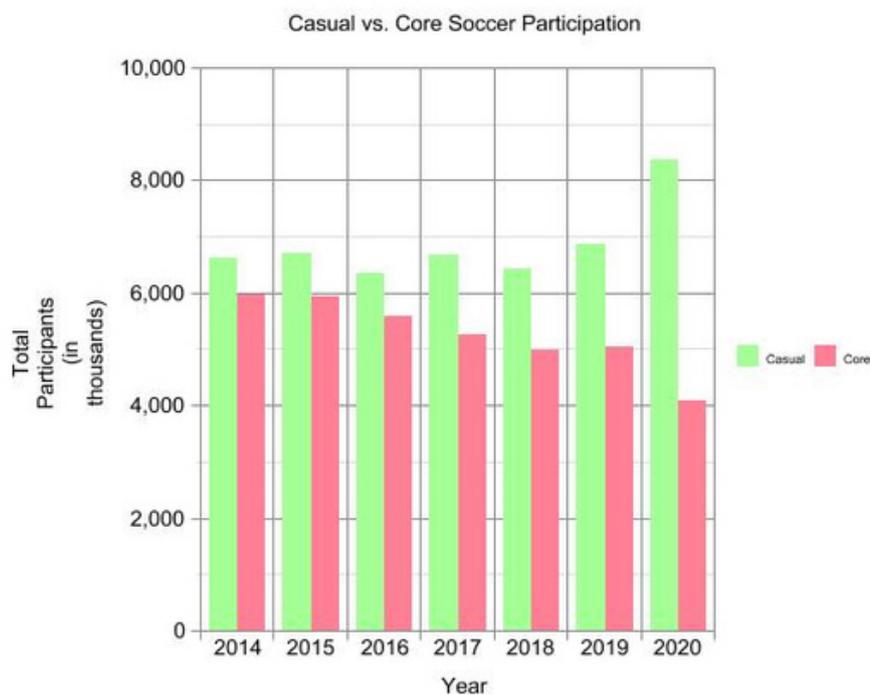


CASUAL VS. CORE PARTICIPATION

When it comes to participation, a determining factor may be what level at which the sport can be played. This is often split into two categories: casual and core participation. Casual participation can be defined as an individual participating in the sport 49 or less times in that year. Core participation is 50 or more times a year.

In 2020, team sports participation was skewed heavily toward casual participation. This recreational participation saw an increase while core participation continued on its recent decline, although at a more dramatic rate (SFIA 2021). As we can see in the bar graph below, core indoor soccer participation has been higher than core for the past 7 years, although there has not been a steady growth pattern.

What we can see is that the difference between casual and core indoor soccer participation spiked dramatically in 2020.

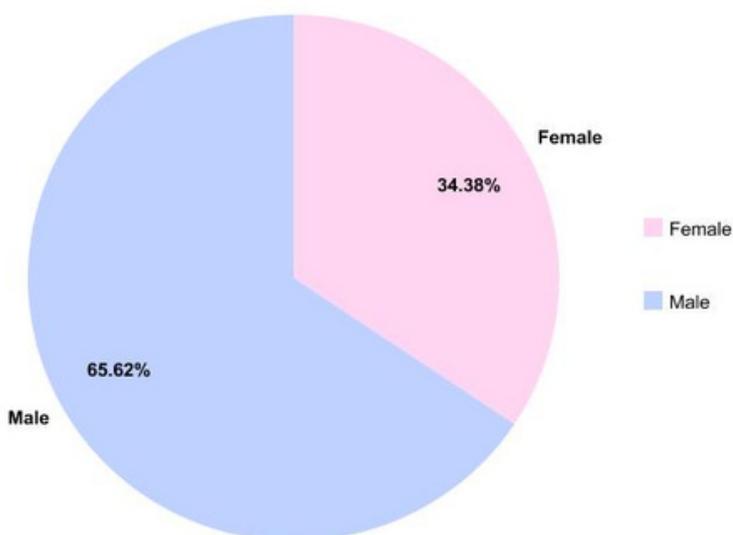


DEMOGRAPHICS: GENDER

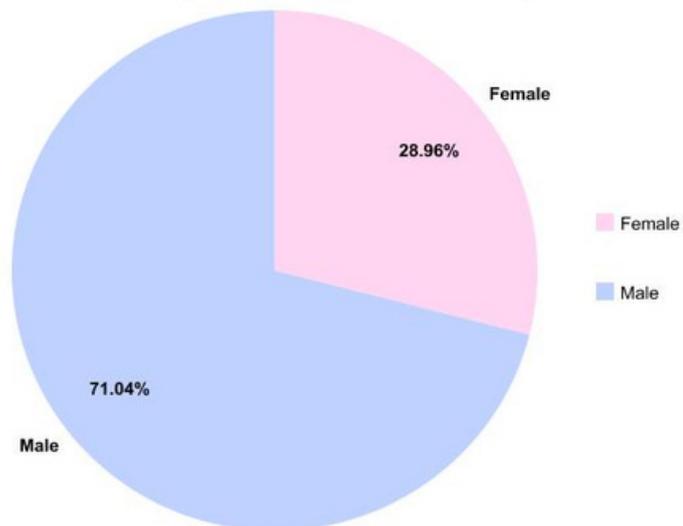
Female soccer has seen an increase in participation over the last decade (Randell 2021). The pattern of growth for indoor soccer has been relatively the same, however, there is a larger percentage of female participants for indoor soccer rather than outdoor.

While females make up an average of only 28% of Outdoor Soccer participants, Indoor Soccer has reached an average of 34%.

Average Male vs. Female Indoor Soccer Participation



Average Male vs. Female Outdoor Soccer Participation



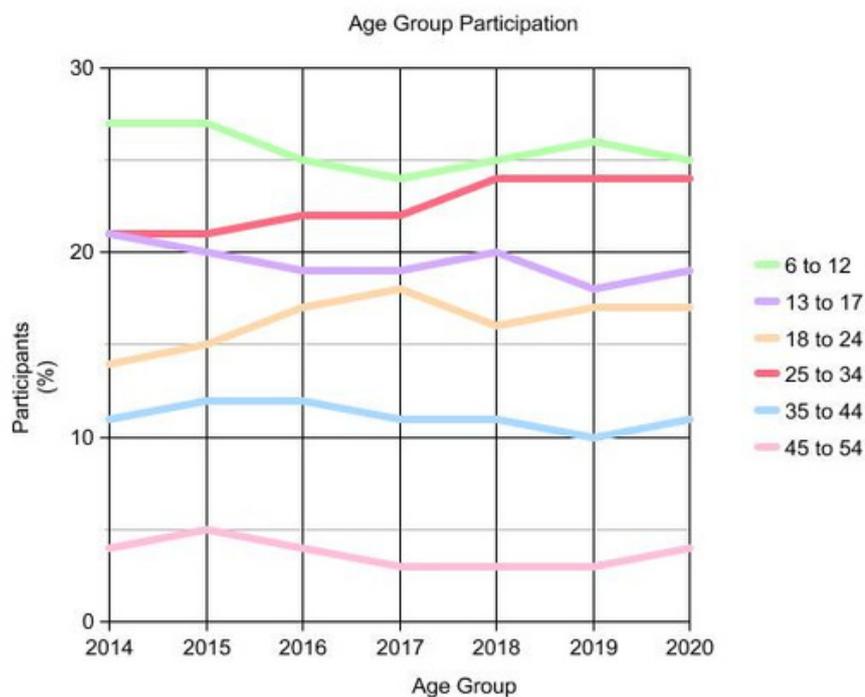
DEMOGRAPHICS:

AGE

Youth soccer has typically been on the rise in the US and has become the largest youth sport in the country (Authority 2022). This may have seen a slight change in recent years, however.

From the graph below we can see that there has been a relative decrease in participation among the 6 to 12 age group. There seemed to be a shift in this pattern between 2017 and 2019, but in 2020 the participants among this age group declined again. A report from SoccerDaily claims that "the number of children playing soccer on a regular basis dropped at the highest rate of all traditional team sports." This may be the case for indoor as well.

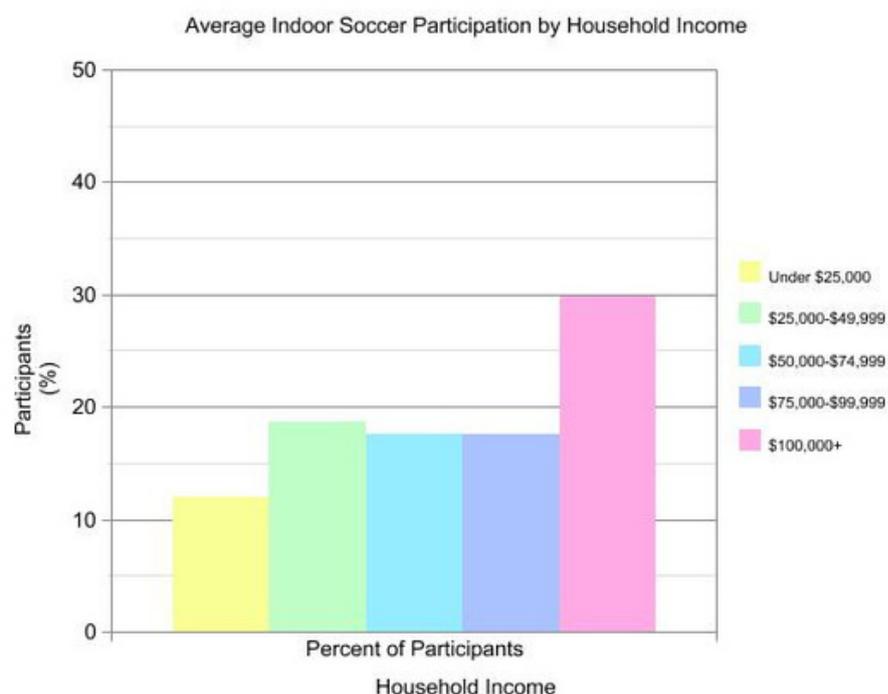
The only age group to suffer from a decrease in participation was the 6 to 12 range, as every other age group either stayed relatively the same or increased.



DEMOGRAPHICS: HOUSEHOLD INCOME

The "pay-to-play" culture in the United States has become highly prevalent in the world of soccer. *Time* reports that the average family will spend \$1,472 per child to participate in club soccer each year. This number does seem to be on the low end, however, and fees can reach over \$10,000 per year (Chaverst 2020).

This makes it increasingly harder for communities with a lower economic status to participate in the sport (Lewis 2022). The same seems to be true for indoor soccer. The largest percentage of indoor soccer participants live with a household income of \$100,000 or more.



SUMMARY

Overall, we can see that while Outdoor Soccer has seen a relative decrease in participation over several years, the same cannot be said about Indoor Soccer. While they are relatively the same sport, Indoor Soccer has been on a rise. Both sports, however, did gain participation throughout the pandemic which might not have been expected since the decrease in overall team sport participation.

In order to continue to grow this sport, it is important to understand the benefits of playing Indoor Soccer. The nature of the sport, with its 360-degree venue and practically no out-of-bounds, makes for an exciting game that allows participants to develop an awareness they may not receive from playing Outdoor Soccer. Since there are very few breaks in play, athletes are able to develop their speed, power, coordination, and endurance. By participating in Indoor Soccer, an athlete can both improve their technical game and enjoy the sport year round (Fromer 2017).

By marketing this sport to the right population, Indoor Soccer could see substantial growth in the coming years.



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